

Testimony to
Assembly Committee on Public Health

On
Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Presented by
State Senator Judy Robson, 15th District,
In support of SB 48

I am pleased to be a sponsor of Senate Bill 48 which will allow pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to participate in Wisconsin's highly successful Volunteer Health Care Provider Program.

Under this program certain volunteer providers of health care services to low-income uninsured persons are considered to be agents of Department of Health and Family Services and, therefore, come under the liability protection of the state.

Since its inception in 1989, our Volunteer Health Care Provider Program has played a significant role, filling in some of our gaps in health care. With the help of this program, physicians, nurses, dentists, optometrists and others who volunteer their time have the comfort of knowing that they will be protected from personal liability.

I wish to thank Mike Dow, a pharmacist from my district, for bringing to my attention the fact that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are not currently included in the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program.

As far as I can determine, this is an oversight, not an intentional exclusion. Therefore, I am pleased to introduce legislation to correct this omission.

Pharmacists and their staff are an integral part of any health care system and their role is growing as prescription drugs become one of the cornerstones of 21st century health care. The ability of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to be involved as volunteers will help improve the care we are able to provide to our neediest citizens.

I want to note that Mike Dow's interest in this issue was not merely an academic one. He knows from personal experience how important it is to be able to encourage pharmacists to volunteer their services.

Mike is a volunteer at HealthNet, the free clinic in Janesville. As Carleen Courtney, the clinic's Executive Director explained it, prior to Mike's arrival their volunteer nurses were dispensing drugs from a cramped room. The patients' pill bottles had hand written labels. And the storage shelves for medications were collapsing.

Within a couple of months, Mike was able to secure donated pharmacy shelving, medication storage bins, a working computer and printer. He negotiated a 50% discount on pharmacy software to be used to print bottle labels. He went on to enter all of the clinic's patients into the computer, saving time for the volunteer nurses and provide more accurate information to patients. In short, Mike Dow totally organized the clinic's drug distribution system so that HealthNet now has a modern, fully functional pharmacy.

Having accomplished all this, Mike was able to find a local pharmacist who was willing to volunteer at HealthNet. But that's where they ran into the concern about professional liability.

With passage of this legislation that would no longer be a concern. HealthNet and dozens of other clinics across Wisconsin can have knowledgeable volunteer pharmacists or pharmacy technicians on hand to more fully meet the needs of their uninsured and low-income clients.

Pharmacists make a difference in the healthcare world and giving them the opportunity to volunteer at free clinics is another way to improve healthcare across the state.

In conclusion, I want to express my appreciation to the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin for their support. I would also like to thank Leah Vukmir, the Assembly sponsor of this bill, as well as the 32 other Senators and Representatives -- from both sides of the aisle -- who are co-sponsors of this bill.

I urge the committee to move as quickly as possible so we can bring more volunteer pharmacists and pharmacy technicians into our free clinics.

To: Members of State Assembly Committee on Public Health
From: Tom Engels, Vice President of Public Affairs,
Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin
Re: Support Senate Bill 48
Date: Tuesday, May 8, 2007

The Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin supports Senate Bill 48, which would include pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program (VHCPP).

Background

Beloit pharmacist and PSW member Mike Dow is President of HealthNet, a free clinic located in Janesville. HealthNet, is staffed by local health care professionals and dispenses over 12,500 prescriptions per year. I have attached an article on Mike Dow and Health Net that appeared in the May/June 2006 issue of the *Journal of the Pharmacy Society of Wisconsin*.

Since 1989, the Volunteer Health Care Provider Program has provided services for many uninsured low income Wisconsin citizens. With the help of this program, physicians, nurses, dentists, optometrists and others who volunteer their time have the comfort of knowing that they will be protected from personal liability. The VHCPP provides health care services from volunteer health care providers through a non-profit agency. These volunteers are, for the provision of services under the VHCPP, state agents of the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS). As agents of DHFS, these volunteers are provided liability protection by the state.

This bill expands the types of volunteer health care providers — who may provide services under the VHCPP and have status as state agents of DHFS — to include licensed pharmacists and persons who perform functions described for pharmacy technicians in rules promulgated by the Pharmacy Examining Board.

The exclusion of pharmacists and technicians appears to be an oversight, not an intentional exclusion. Pharmacists and their staff are an integral part of any health care system and their role is growing as prescription drugs become one of the cornerstones of 21st century health care. The ability of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to be involved as volunteers will help improve the care we are able to provide to our neediest citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Free Clinics: Providing Health Care to Uninsured and Low Income Patients

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are urgently needed as part of volunteer health care teams

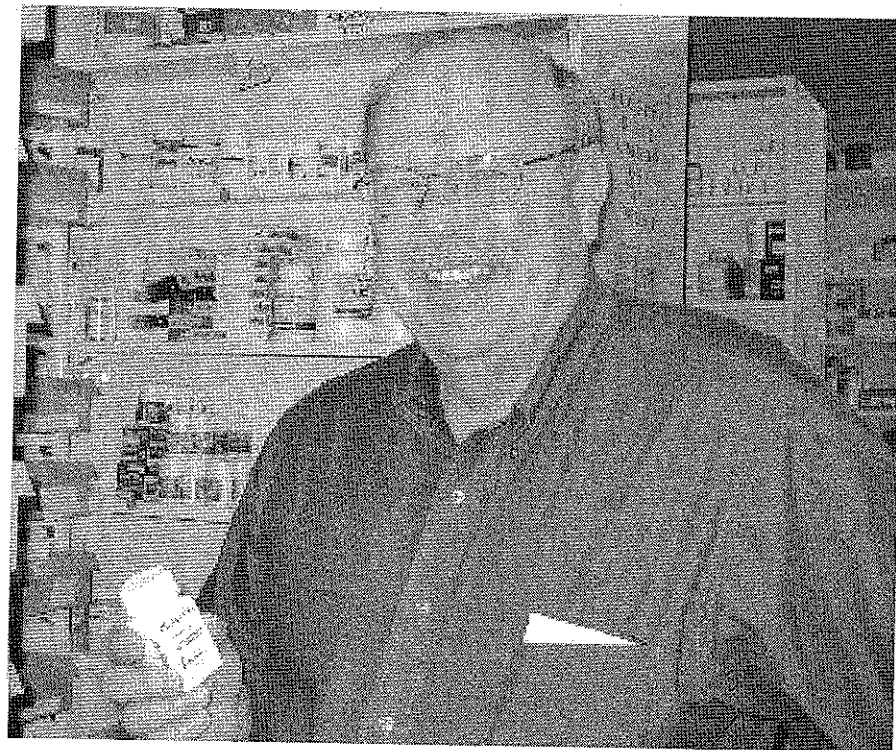
by Natalie Patrice Daniel

It is estimated that there are over 1,000 free clinics in the United States with approximately 200,000 physicians volunteering in them.¹ There are only a few pharmacists present among these clinics.¹ Most free clinics are only open on selected days and some for only a few hours per week.² Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are urgently needed to staff these clinics. Without proper pharmacy licensure, free clinics often refuse to fill outside prescriptions.²

Most free clinics are located in modest facilities. Often the equipment and supplies are obsolete and scarce. This is generally because free clinics rely greatly on city and federal government donations along with state grant funding and various other non-profit organizations, including the United Way, as well as assistance from community volunteers.^{2,3} The variety of services provided reflects the health care needs of the targeted community. However, free clinics generally share a common mission of providing access to health care to patients who are medically needy and cannot afford to pay for basic health care services, and giving service and treatment with dignity and respect.⁴

In 2001, a national survey of medical free clinics reported 75 percent of clinics described their target population as the "uninsured" and 23 percent as "low income."⁵ With regard to race, over half of the patients were white (55.1%), followed by 21.8% black and 18.7% Hispanic. In addition, 61.8% of patients were female.⁵ To qualify for services at a free clinic the patient generally must present proof of income (e.g., current income tax statement, W-2 form, pay stubs, etc.). Patient eligibility is based on established income criteria.

It is estimated that there are 41 million uninsured people living in America. Of these, only 650,000 have acquired



Pharmacists are largely underrepresented in free clinics. As a volunteer at HealthNet of Janesville Inc., Michael Dow, RPh helps fill 12,500 prescriptions per year.

assistance from free clinics.⁵ Although there are more people that actively seek services from free clinics on a daily basis, there remains a large portion of patients and health care professionals who do not benefit because they are not aware of these types of services. Most patients who have been fortunate to have the advantage of a free clinic have been referred by word of mouth. Some are referred by other medical facilities; others may be referred as a result of media coverage.³ Unfortunately, due to the cost of advertising, most free clinics rely on creative news networks. As such, advertising sources that are concentrated in areas with Internet services, such as higher educational facilities, deny those not privy to such environments of much

needed health care information.

To date, there are over 30 free clinics in Wisconsin,³ and according to the Wisconsin Medical Society, there are about a dozen free clinics operating in the metropolitan and suburban regions of Milwaukee.²

In 1994, local health care professionals in Janesville established the free clinic known as HealthNet of Janesville Inc. Since HealthNet opened, the clinic has expanded its services to include triage and pharmacy components that emphasize chronic management of hypertension, diabetes and respiratory disorders. HealthNet had a record 2,400 clinic visits in 2005, a 94% increase since its opening in 1994.³

ONE PHARMACIST MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Beloit pharmacist Michael Dow has played a vital role in the prosperity of HealthNet. His contributions have included refurbishing the facility to look and function as an active pharmacy, adding a dispensing counter and incorporating pharmacy software that enhances the organization and expansion of patient files. As a result of these changes, HealthNet fills an estimated 12,500 prescriptions per year.³

HealthNet has changed the lives of many patients, such as a retired couple who have lived in Beloit since 1972. Prior to attending the free clinic, their combined medications ran about \$1,200 per month. They no longer had health coverage.⁶ After the husband's heart surgery at Mercy Hospital in 1999, the couple was referred to HealthNet because of their need for continued health care. Since 1999 the retired couple has been using the services of HealthNet. They look forward to each visit and rave over the respectful care and unconditional devotion of the pharmacists. In particular, Dow spends many hours helping to maintain their complicated regimens. In addition, these retired patients continuously refer prospective candidates to HealthNet.⁶

The cost of health care is increasing every year; more people are faced with the burdens of maintaining health care while being unemployed and uninsured.⁷ Qualified prospective patients need to gain more awareness and take advantage of free clinics. Persons seeking to learn more about free clinics in their community can visit a local library, search the Internet or inquire at county hospitals or health professional programs.

Patients and health care representatives need to be more proactive in their awareness of community resources. Those able to invest financially or take greater initiative to actively participate are fostering the success of their community's free clinics.

North Carolina and Iowa are two of the few states that have established rotations for pharmacy students at free clinics.^{2,8} A great part of the success of free clinics in these states is attributed to greater involvement of pharmacy representatives. In 1999, North Carolina's Board of Pharmacy granted recognition for every three hours of volunteer work at

a free clinic to equate for one contact hour of continuing education, up to a maximum of three contact hours per year.⁹ Recognizing pharmacists for volunteering at free clinics encourages them to continue and motivates other pharmacists to participate.

Because pharmacists play a vital role in ensuring the safe use of medications for all members of society, volunteer pharmacists are eager to see more members of their profession involved at free clinics.

"I believe that patients outside the 'normal health care system' deserve the same safeguards as the rest of the insured population," says Dow. "Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians make a difference in the health care world and the opportunity to help, to volunteer at free clinics is another way to make an impact toward better health care in our cities, states and nation."³

As the demands for free clinics increase, so too do the demands for underrepresented pharmacist volunteers. Much of the future success of free clinics is contingent on enhancing the presence of pharmacy representatives. ●

Natalie Patrice Daniel is a second-year PharmD student at the UW School of Pharmacy.

PSW members serving in free clinics in Wisconsin are encouraged to submit a brief description of their activities to the PSW office.



LOCATE A FREE CLINIC

WWW.UNITEFORSIGHT.ORG/
FREECLINICS.PHP

HEALTHNET, INC. OF JANESVILLE
(608) 756-4636

REFERENCES

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PHARMSTAFF

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FREE CLINICS OF WISCONSIN

The following information is current as of March 3, 2006. For questions or information regarding free clinics in Wisconsin, please contact Linda Smith at Community Outreach Health Clinic in Menomonee Falls, (262) 253-7162.

Organization Name	Contact Person	City	Phone #	Email Address
Benevolent Specialist Project-Free Clinic	Kathy Williams, Clinic Coord.	Middleton	608-827-2308	kathleen.williams@deancare.com
Chippewa Valley Free Clinic	Susan Strom, RN	Eau Claire	715-839-8477	freeclinic@charter.net
Church Health Services, Inc.		Beaver Dam	920-887-1766	
Community Clinic of Door County	Josephine Guenzel	Sturgeon Bay	920-746-8989	communityclinic@sbcglobal.net
Community Outreach Health Clinic	Linda Smith, NP	Menomonee Falls	262-253-7162	lsmith@communitymemorial.com
Dr. James E. Albrecht Free Clinic (site #1)	Lynn Pasbrig	West Bend	262-334-8339	lpasbrig@stjosephswb.com
Dr. James E. Albrecht Free Clinic (site #2)	Lynn Pasbrig	Hartford	262-670-7774	
Free Clinic of the Greater Menomonee Area, Inc.	Mary Blanchard Dennis Ciesielski	Menomonie	715-308-3808 715-231-2710	blanchard.mary@mayo.edu dciesielski@co.dunn.wi.us
Greater Milwaukee Free Clinic	Kathleen Schneider	West Allis	414-546-3733	schneidg98@yahoo.com
Health Care Network, Inc.	Barb Tylenda	Racine	262-632-2400	barbtylenda@tds.net
HealthNet of Janesville, Inc.	Carleen Courtney	Janesville	608-756-4638	hnet@choiceonemail.com
La Clinica Family Health and Dental		Wautoma		
Lake Area Free Clinic	Donna Voigt, APNP	Oconomowoc	262-569-4990	donna.voigt@phci.org
Living Healthy Community Clinic	Leona Whitman	Oshkosh	920-424-1242	whitman@uwosh.edu
Lorain Co. Free Clinic	Paul Baumgartner			
Marquette Clinic for Women & Children at the Guesthouse	Louise Buchman	Milwaukee	414-345-3244	
MCW-Issac Cogg's Saturday Clinic	Adam Ronan, Co-Director	Milwaukee		adamronan@hotmail.com
MEDIC	Sharon Younkin	Madison	608-262-4204	slyounkin@wisc.edu
NEW Community Clinic	Bonnie Kuhr	Green Bay	920-437-9773	newcomm@netnet.net
Ozaukee Community Health Clinic	Jeannette Meunier, Chris Doers	Mequon	262-243-7414	jmeunier@columbia-stmarys.org
Packard Avenue Community Clinic	Ed Wrench	Cudahy	414-769-2239	wrenche@ci.cudahy.wi.us
Rock River Free Clinic	Gail Scott, RN-Jan Roou, RN	Jefferson	920-674-7275	gails@co.jefferson.wi.us
Salvation Army Clinic	Nancy Szudzik	Milwaukee	414-265-6360	
Salvation Army Health Care Clinic	Pam Sandee	Sheboygan	920-458-3723	pam_sandee@usc.salvationarmy.org
Samaritan Health Clinic-Fond du Lac		Fond du Lac	920-926-4841	samaritan@agnesian.com
Samaritan Health Clinic-Waupun	Liz Hoffman	Waupun	920-324-6540	
Saturday Clinic for the Uninsured	Jim Sanders, MD	Milwaukee	414-588-2865	
Springer Memorial Free Clinic	Sue Klemm, RN	Rhineland	715-361-2066	sklemm@shsmh.org
St. Clare Health Mission	Sandy Brekke Rebecca Nesse	La Crosse	608-791-9544	brekke.sandra@mayo.edu nesse.rebecca@mayo.edu
St. Clare Health Mission of Sparta	Patricia Raftery, DO	Sparta	608-269-1770	raftery.patricia@mayo.edu
St. Francis Community Clinic	Fr. Martin P. Carr	Oshkosh	920-231-2378	
St. Joseph's Medical & Dental Clinic	Gerry McCormick	Waukesha	262-544-6777	
St. Vincent de Paul Free Clinic	Christy O'Dea	Merrill	715-539-9566	o'dea.christine@marshfieldclinic.org
The Good Neighbor Clinic of Sauk Prairie	H.P. Carlson, MD	Prairie du Sac	608-643-4749	2csa104@merr.com
Twin Counties Free Clinic	Cindy Johnson	Marinette	715-732-1349	tcfc@bamc.org
Volunteers in Health Care (disconnect)	Sarah Hanson	Marshfield		schanson@wctc.net
Walker's Point Community Clinic	Steve Ohly	Milwaukee	414-672-6679	steve.ohly@aurora.org
	Roberta Manley	Greenfield	414-803-1746	rmanley@wi.rr.com

